

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ATLANTA DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

HARRESCIA HOPKINS,

Defendant.

CRIMINAL ACTION NO.

1:22-CR-00284-SEG-CMS-1

ORDER

This case comes before the Court on Defendant Harrescia Hopkins's motion to restore her civil rights and to seal her criminal record. (Doc. 71.) On June 9, 2023, Ms. Hopkins was sentenced to five months in custody for two counts of wire fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343. (Doc. 35.) It appears that she has since served her prison sentence and completed her term of supervised release. (Doc. 71 at 1.)

On February 2, 2026, Ms. Hopkins filed a pro se motion to restore her civil rights and to seal her criminal record. (Doc. 71.) Ms. Hopkins identifies several career accomplishments and efforts towards rehabilitation that she has made since completing her sentence. She argues that the continued denial of her civil rights—specifically, her right to carry firearms—and the public nature of her criminal record burdens her with undue hardship, limited employment

opportunities, and difficulty reintegrating into society. (*Id.* at 2.) Ms. Hopkins further argues that the relief requested “would not endanger public safety” but would rather “be consistent with principles of fairness, second chances, and reintegration.” (*Id.*) The Government has not responded to the motion.

I. Restoration of Civil Rights

Ms. Hopkins seeks, specifically, the restoration of her “right to carry/firearm rights.” (*Id.* at 1.) Federal law prohibits the possession of firearms by persons who have been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year. 18 U.S.C. § 922(g). This “disability” on a convicted person’s right to possess firearms can be removed if the person is pardoned, the conviction is expunged, or the person’s civil rights are restored under federal law. 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(20); *Beecham v. United States*, 511 U.S. 368, 371–74 (1994). A person who is prohibited from possessing firearms may apply to the Attorney General for relief. 18 U.S.C. § 925(c).

Whether Ms. Hopkins’s rights can be restored is a “complicated question,” which involves the interpretation of federal law. *Beecham*, 511 U.S. at 373 n. *. But Ms. Hopkins has not cited any federal law that authorizes this Court to restore her right to carry firearms, nor has the Court identified any such authority. Though district courts may review the Attorney General’s

denial of an application for relief under § 925(c), Ms. Hopkins has not shown that she has submitted such an application. In fact, “this option has been ‘rendered inoperative’ because Congress has barred the Attorney General from using appropriated funds to review these applications[.]” *United States v. Dubois*, 139 F.4th 887, 898 (11th Cir. 2025) (Pryor, J., concurring) (quoting *Logan v. United States*, 552 U.S. 23, 28 n.1 (2007)). Therefore, even if Ms. Hopkins has applied for relief from a federal firearms disability under § 925(c), this Court lacks jurisdiction to review her application. *See United States v. Bean*, 537 U.S. 71, 76 (2002) (“[M]ere inaction by [Attorney General or delegate] does not invest a district court with independent jurisdiction to act on an application.”).

To the extent Ms. Hopkins is seeking expungement of her conviction, the Court finds no authority permitting such action. There appears to be no federal statute to authorize such relief. *See United States v. Adalikwu*, 757 F. App’x 909, 911 (11th Cir. 2018) (“[Defendant] concedes that federal law does not offer a specific statute authorizing the general expungement of a criminal record.”). The Court lacks jurisdiction to expunge Ms. Hopkins’s conviction on equitable grounds, *id.* at 912 (citing *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am.*, 511 U.S. 375, 379–80 (1994)), and on constitutional grounds. *United States v. Batmasian*, 66 F.4th 1278, 1283 (11th Cir. 2023).

Ultimately, the Court lacks jurisdiction to restore Ms. Hopkins's right to carry a firearm. Although her efforts toward rehabilitation are commendable, the Court cannot grant her relief without jurisdiction and authority to do so. Accordingly, Ms. Hopkins's motion to restore her civil rights is denied.

II. Sealing of Criminal Record

“The press and public enjoy a qualified First Amendment right of access to criminal trial proceedings.” *United States v. Ochoa-Vasquez*, 428 F.3d 1015, 1028 (11th Cir. 2005) (internal citations omitted). “This right extends not only to the criminal trial itself, but also to other integral parts of the trial process[.]” *Id.* at 1028 n.14. Further, “the press and public’s qualified First Amendment right to access criminal proceedings extends to the proceedings’ docket sheets.” *Id.* at 1029 (citing *United States v. Valenti*, 987 F.2d 708, 715 (11th Cir. 1993)).

There is a presumption of openness that “[a] party may overcome . . . if it can show ‘an overriding interest based on findings that closure is essential to preserve higher values and is narrowly tailored to serve that interest.’” *Id.* at 1030 (quoting *Press-Enter. Co. v. Super. Ct. of Cal., Riverside Cnty.*, 464 U.S. 501, 510 (1984)). “When sealing proceedings or documents, a court must articulate the overriding interest ‘along with findings specific enough that a reviewing court can determine whether the closure order was properly entered.’” *Id.* (quoting *Press-Enter. Co.*, 464 U.S. at 510).

The Court acknowledges that Ms. Hopkins has completed her sentence and further acknowledges the reality that a criminal conviction can pose barriers to employment. However, Ms. Hopkins has not cited any special circumstances that would warrant the restriction of all public access to the records of this case. Her interest in furthering her employment prospects and in her overall rehabilitation exists in nearly every federal criminal case and is not sufficiently extraordinary to override the presumption of openness in criminal proceedings. The Court will therefore deny her motion to seal or restrict her criminal record.

III. Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Ms. Hopkins's motion to restore her civil rights and seal her criminal record is **DENIED**. (Doc. 71.)

SO ORDERED this 18th day of June, 2026.



SARAH E. GERAGHTY
United States District Judge